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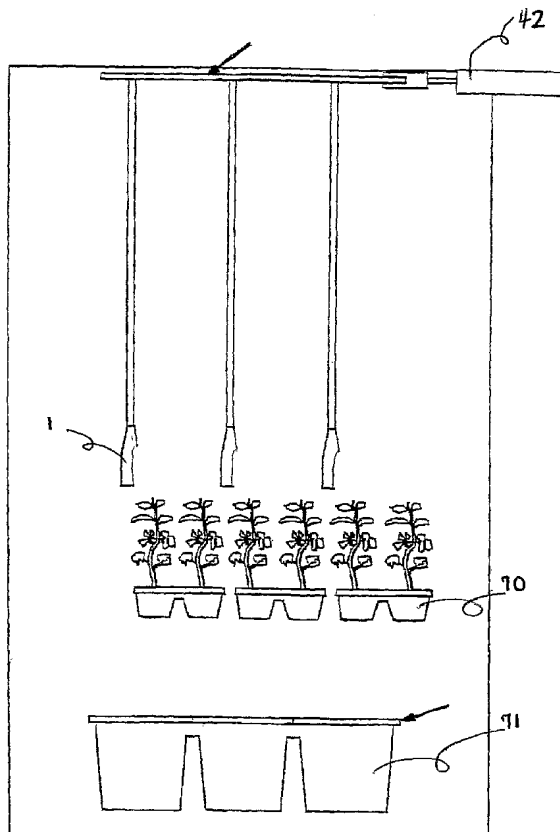
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(54) Title: PLANT PUNCH METHODS AND APPARATUS



(57) Abstract: Embodiments focus on imparting a horizontally shifting motion to a plant punch element (1) during a part of a plant punch cycle (18) so as to reduce contact of a plant punching surface (38) with the plant during the plant punch. Plant punch elements that are particularly suited for such "shifting" capability may include a gap (41) facilitating lateral movement of the plant punch element to a position around at least part of the plant to be punched. Aspects of the inventive technology also address a sheltering plant punch apparatus that can also reduce injury and stress experienced by the plant while it is punched. Combinations of aspects disclosed herein provide a high degree of protection to the plant during a plant punch, thereby reducing stress experienced by the plant during the punch.

WO 2005/102028 A1



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